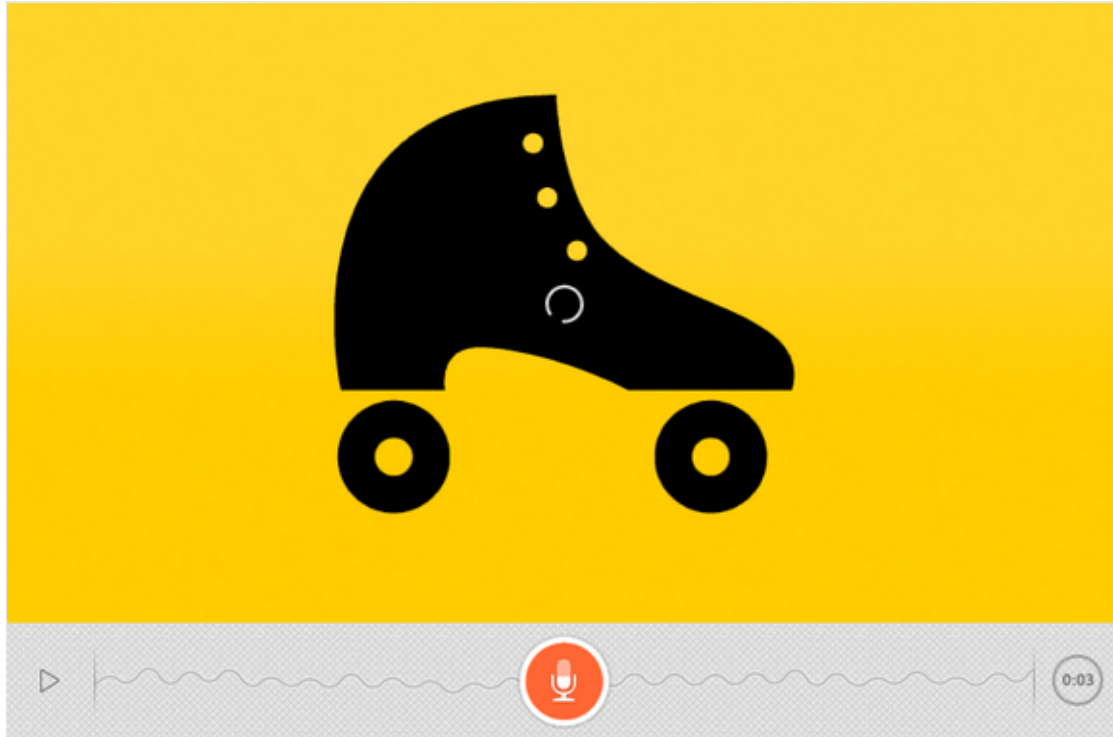


Adobe Voice review: Video storytelling software captures some of Apple's magic

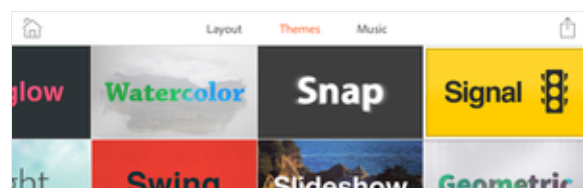


What's your story? That's the question [the Adobe Voice app](#) for the iPad is clamoring to help you answer. The app combines the boring task of making slideshows with a fun, [iMovie Trailers-esque](#) feel; it's one of the company's most beautiful iPad apps to date, and it's incredibly easy to use.

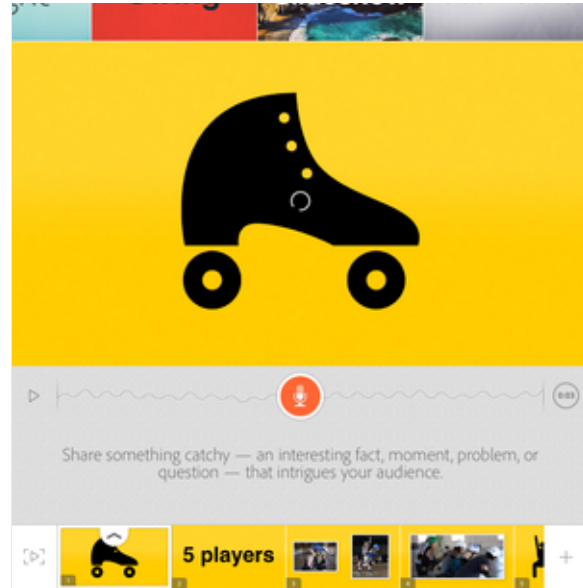
Voice is free on the App Store, though it does require a Creative Cloud account to publish your videos; unlike with Adobe's [Lightroom for iPad](#), however, that account doesn't have to be a paid one—free will do just fine. You'll also need iOS 7 and an iPad 2 or later (or iPad mini or later).

When you first launch Voice, you're presented with a quick tutorial video about the app. Its basic tenet: Vocals are key. When you create anything in Voice, you start by laying down a short audio recording. You can then add royalty-free clipart, photos, or text (or all three), and blend it with some backing music.

Weirdly for an iPad app, you do this all in

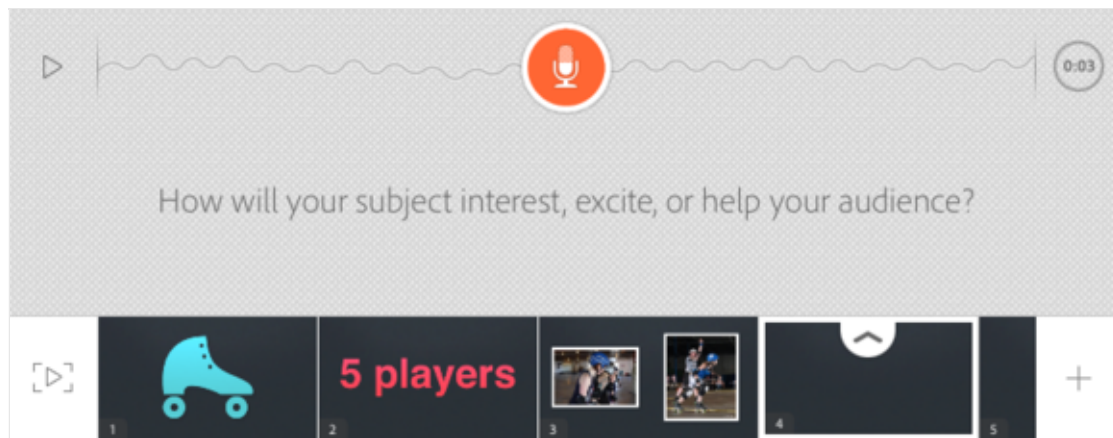


...erally, for an iPad app, you do this in portrait mode—but it doesn't feel as awkward as it could. Adobe makes excellent use of the vertical space, stacking its menu atop the video preview, along with both the vocal recording and the slide timeline. Using an iPad mini, handheld editing in portrait felt just fine; if you have a larger iPad, you'll probably want to edit with the iPad on a flat surface, rather than holding it aloft while editing.



Unlike most iPad apps, Adobe Voice uses portrait orientation.

When you create your first story, Voice asks a few questions to get the process going, including “What’s Your Story About?”, with a few dozen prompts below if you’re having trouble. Once you’ve named your project, you can pick a structure—which will prepopulate your slides with some questions for you to answer—or choose to go your own way and make up your own slide order.

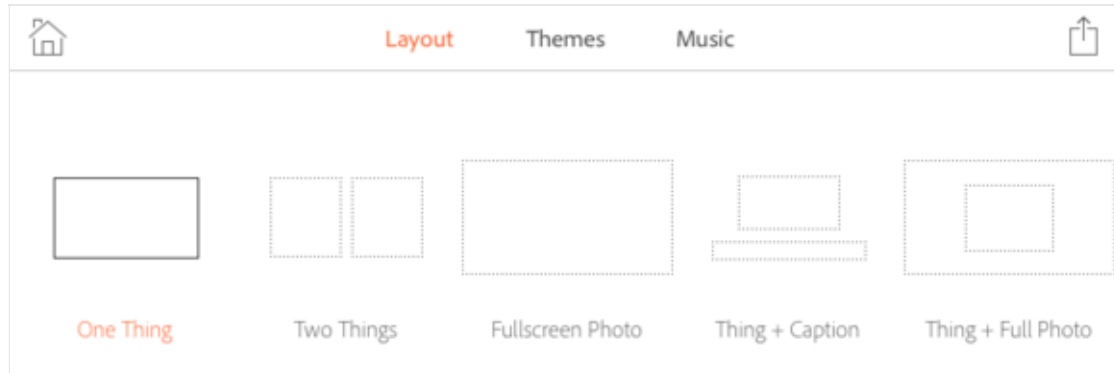


Voice offers some basic questions to help get you and your story on the right track.

After that, you’re in Voice’s main editing panel, which displays three menus, a video preview, a section for vocal recording, and the timeline. To work on a slide, simply tap it; prompts should appear for recording, adding images or text, and more.

By design, Voice is a great deal more limited than programs like iMovie or [Keynote](#) though you have over 60 themes to choose from, you can't track fonts or mix and

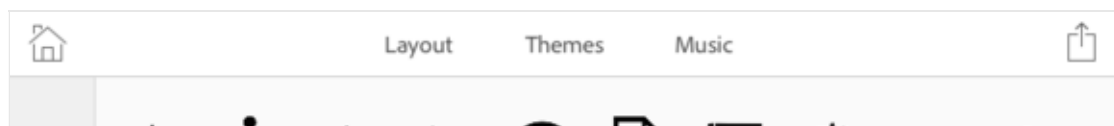
—though you have over 50 themes to choose from, you can't tweak fonts or mix and match transitions from one theme to another. And each slide's layout is limited to just five options: A solo picture/text/icon (or, as Voice dubs it, a "thing"), two things side by side, a fullscreen photo, a thing and a caption, or a thing and a fullscreen photo. If you pick multiple objects side-by-side, you can't control when they fade in during the slide; they automatically populate at the same time. Music, too, is limited to just a handful of Adobe-licensed tunes; there's no way to upload tracks from your music library or other services.

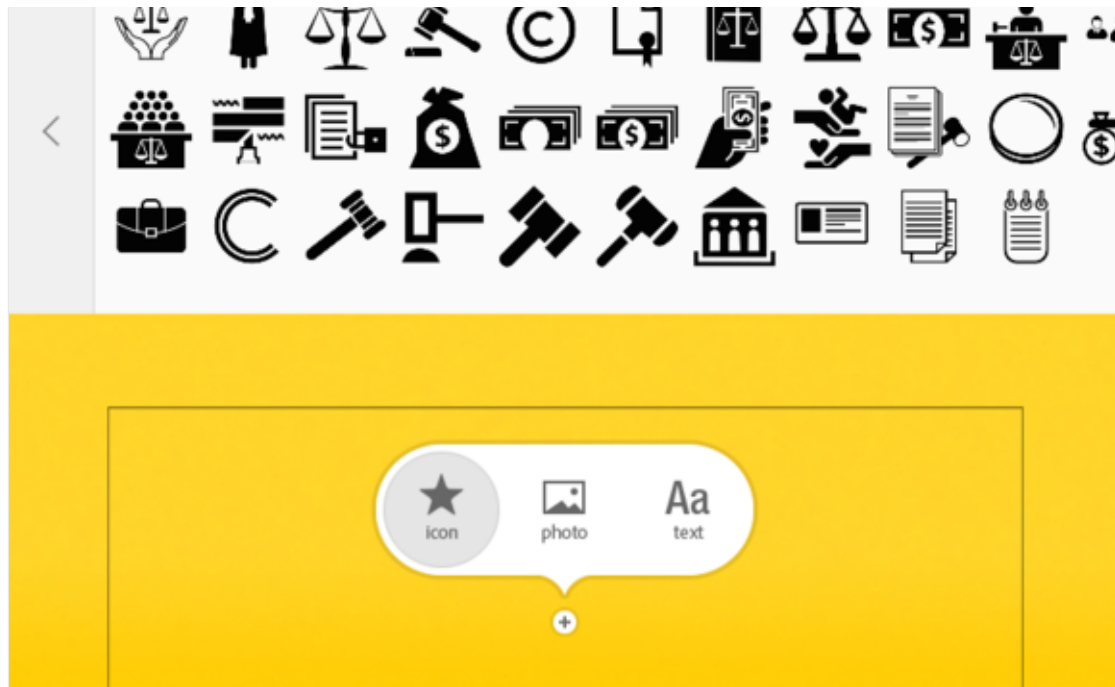


You have just five options to choose from in Voice's layout menu.

While I personally was annoyed by not being able to independently adjust objects (or drag them from one pane to the other), it's likely for the greater good of Adobe Voice's audience. The app doesn't appear to target master tweekers, who might find Apple's Keynote a better fit; instead, it focuses on the average user—the one who hates making slideshows or video and knows nothing about typography or object balance.

Really, Adobe has taken a very Apple-like approach to Voice: By limiting what its users can tweak or move, the company has ensured that most everything you create with its app will turn out beautifully. There's no place to get bogged down with font choices or color coordination; Voice does it for you. It won't even let you mix and match themes in a single presentation, guaranteeing that your transitions will look consistent across the board. It may annoy power users, but power users have other programs to sate their desires; the average tablet user doesn't.





You can add all sorts of fun icons to your Voice projects thanks to Adobe's giant library of Creative Commons-licensed images.

Despite the limitations, there's still plenty of room to play. Adobe has included over 25,000 royalty-free icons and millions of Creative Commons-licensed images for slides, and its search function is blessedly simple: Just type in your query, and images or icons pop up in a side-scrollable list. You can also pull photos from your camera or Camera Roll, your Creative Cloud account, Facebook, or Dropbox with the tap of a finger.

Even better, Voice automatically adds attribution for Creative Commons-licensed images and icons in an auto-populated credits screen at the end of your video. You'll need to add credits yourself for your personal pictures, of course, but it's a nice gesture from Adobe and a great use of CC licensing.

Sharing a finished Voice video is also thankfully easy—rather than worrying about hosting the file yourself, your project is automatically uploaded to Adobe's servers. It's your choice whether that video is public—and thus, can be displayed under the app's Explore section for other users—or private, viewable only to those who have the link. From there, you can share on Facebook, Twitter, via Messages or email, or by embedding it on your website properly. (Heck, my hastily-made project took just minutes to share and was dead simple to embed into this article.)

The one thing I wish you could do is download the video to your Camera Roll—there's no real way to save the finished project offline, which seems like a huge omission for those without constant data access.

Bottom line

For the inexperienced presentation-maker, Voice is a godsend. It's simple to learn, hard to mess up, and fills a gap that Apple's Keynote and Microsoft's PowerPoint probably didn't even realize they were leaving. Even more experienced users may enjoy this program for quick-hit pieces—after all, sometimes it's in the limitations, not the features, where you can find true beauty.

What's your story? Adobe's brilliant new Voice app is designed to help you answer that question. Though it may not please pros, it's a perfect video storytelling tool for the average user.